

The Relationship Between Responsible Drinking Policies and Football Game-Day Incidents at The Ohio State University: a Preliminary Study

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Introduction & Background

Studies have shown that crime, misconduct, and incidents tend to increase within and around stadiums during football games, in particular, alcohol-related misconducts (Reese and Schnepel 2008, Merlo et al. 2010, Kalist and Lee 2014). Ohio Stadium, home to The Ohio State University (OSU) Buckeyes college football team, hosts 7 to 8 annual home football games each fall. Minimal research has been presented observing trends regarding incidents during OSU's home football games. Furthermore, the causes for these potential trends remain unknown.

In 2015, The Ohio Stadium began selling alcohol as a pilot program to guests with tickets in suite and club levels of the stadium. The Ohio Stadium extended their pilot program starting in 2016, selling alcohol stadium-wide to guests of age for the very first time. Guests are now able to purchase a maximum of two alcoholic beverages per person/at a time (OSU Athletics). The stadium-wide alcohol sales could influence guests to drink more responsibly by giving them the opportunity to drink moderately inside the stadium. This may discourage the amount of alcohol consumed outside the stadium prior to the game.

Additionally, the Ohio Stadium began enforcing a new bag policy, which prohibits guests from bringing bags or purses of any size (OSU Athletics). This new no-bag policy limits guests from bringing in outside alcohol into the stadium. These stadium policies can be defined as "responsible drinking policies" used to prevent binge drinking behavior amongst guests.



"Fans cheer as players run onto the field at Ohio Stadium before a game." -credit: The Lantern OSU Student Newspaper file photo

Hypothesis

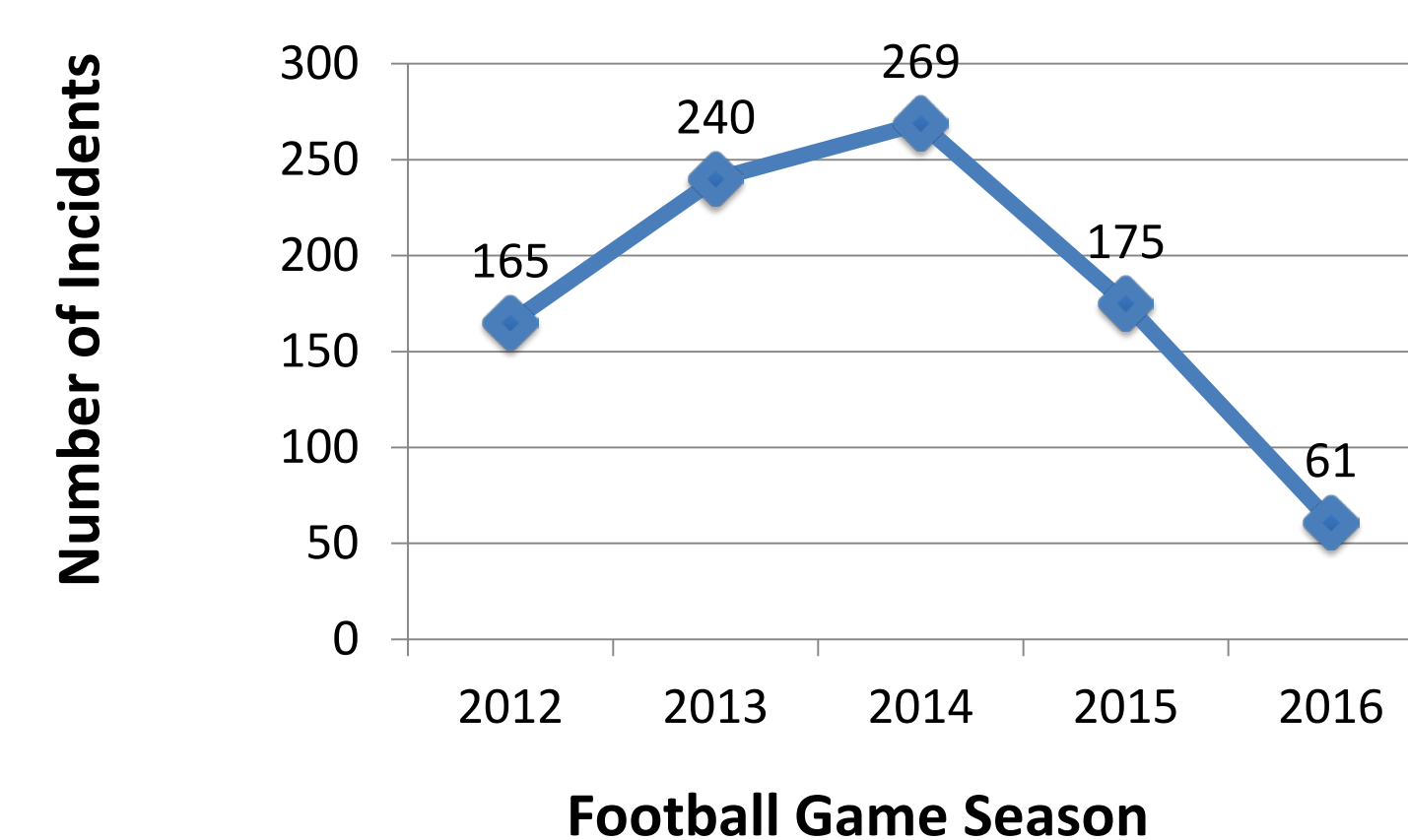
- Responsible drinking policies, which are reflected through stadium-wide alcohol sales and bag-policy, are associated with a reduction of game day incidents

Methods & Data Collection

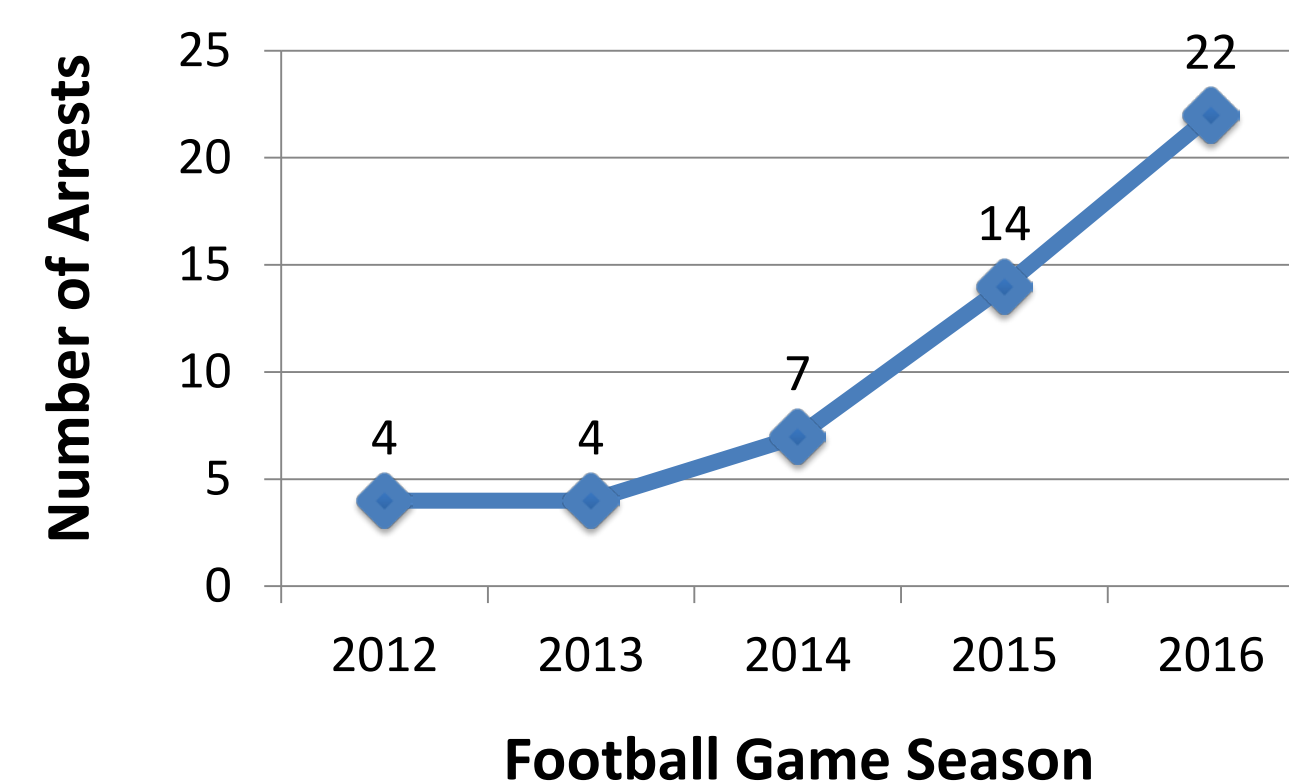
- Incident statistics from OSU's Department of Public Safety were examined for the 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016 OSU home football game seasons.
- Alcohol and other types of arrests (in-stadium and out-of-stadium), alcohol citations, and stadium ejections were compared across the five seasons.
- The following were observed as potential variables influencing game-day incidents:
 - Game Time* - recorded from OSU Dept. of Athletics
 - Stadium Attendance Statistics* - gathered from ESPN Analytics and OSU Dept. of Athletics
 - Game Points Scored* - gathered from ESPN Analytics and OSU Dept. of Athletics
 - Game Day Temperatures* - gathered from the National Weather Service Forecast Office records

Results

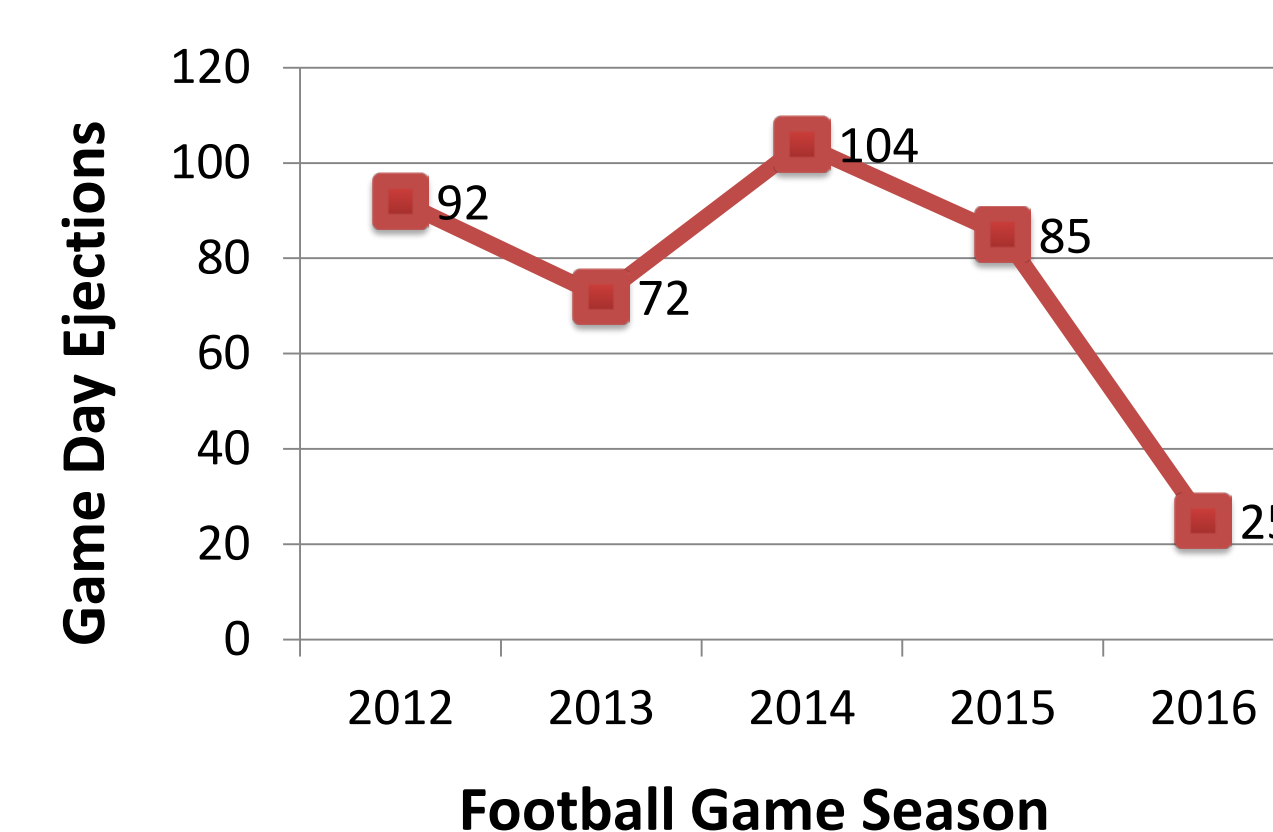
Total Game Day Incidents by Season



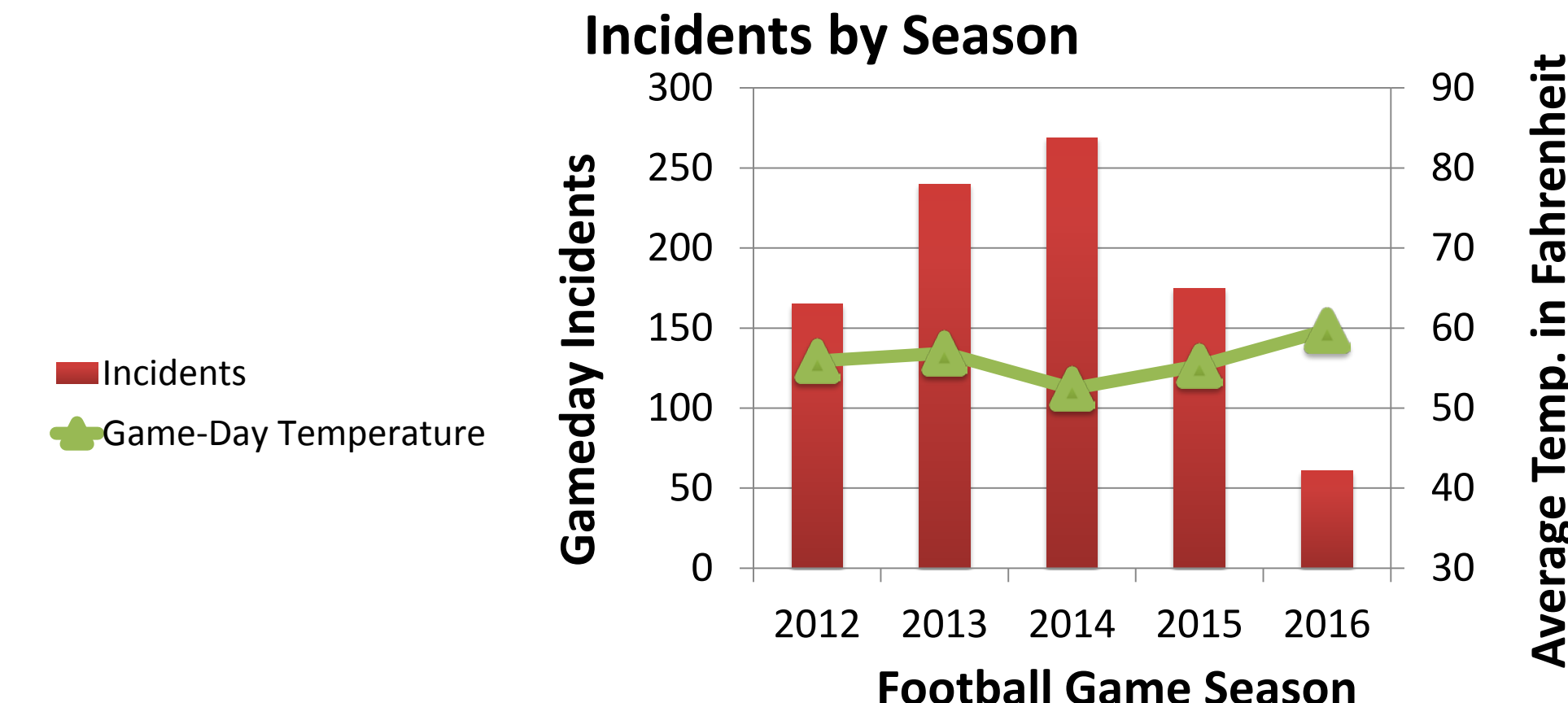
Total In-Stadium Alcohol Arrests by Season



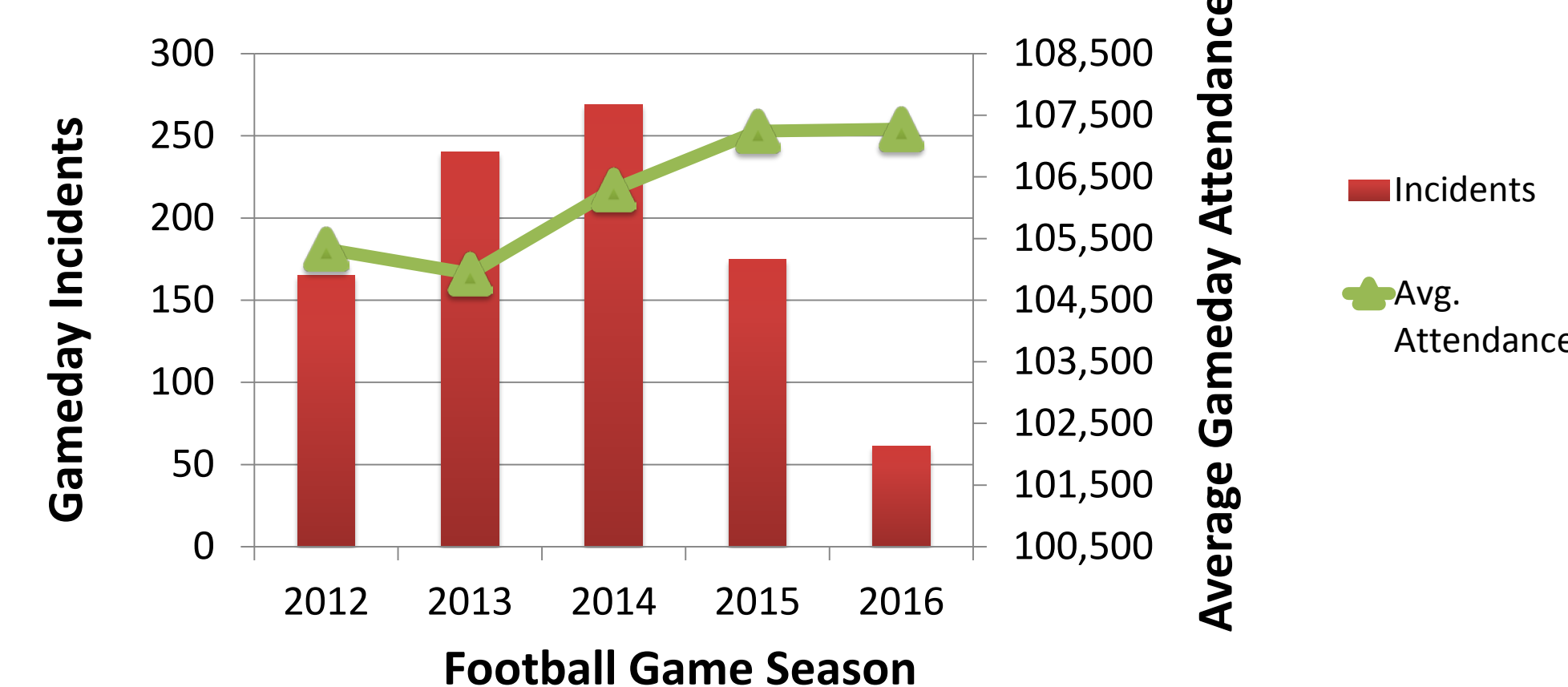
Total Game Day Ejections by Season



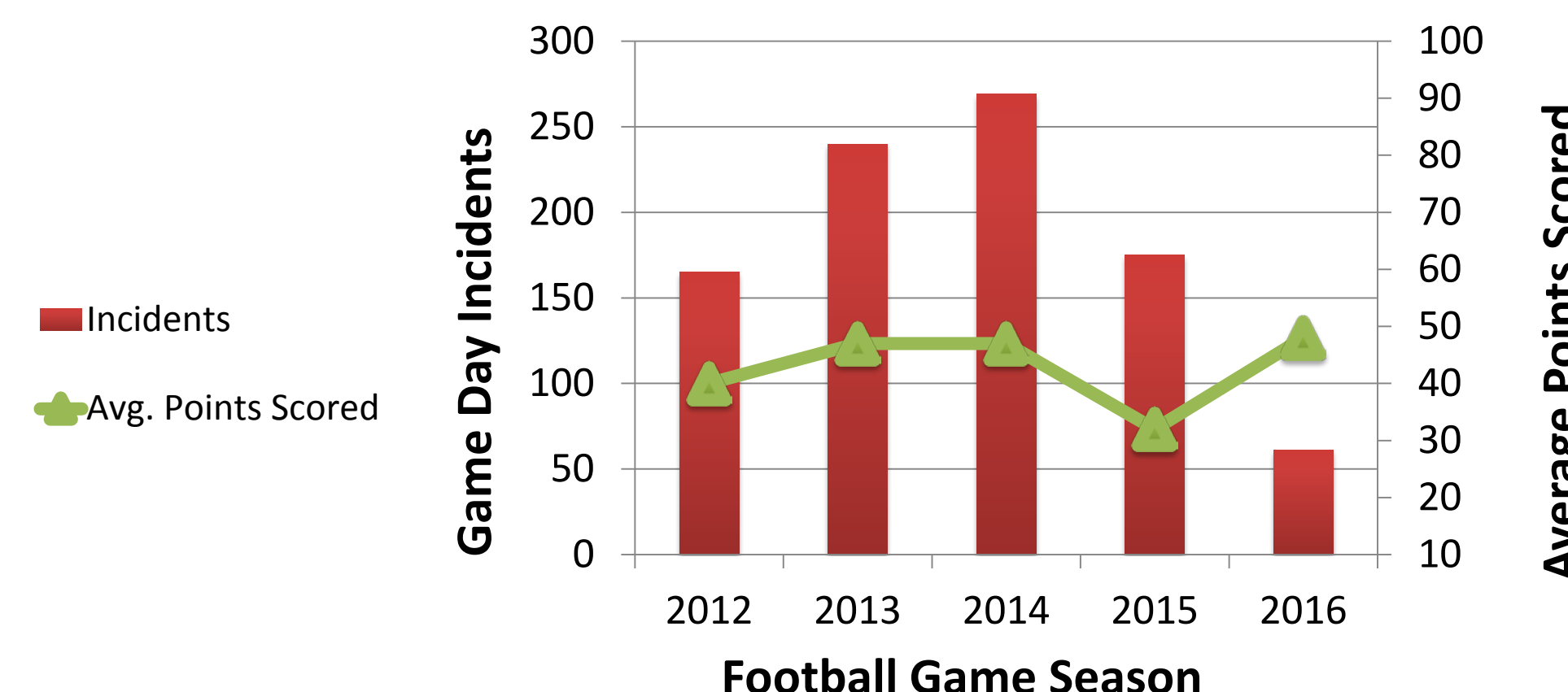
Average Game Day Temperature vs. Game Day Incidents by Season



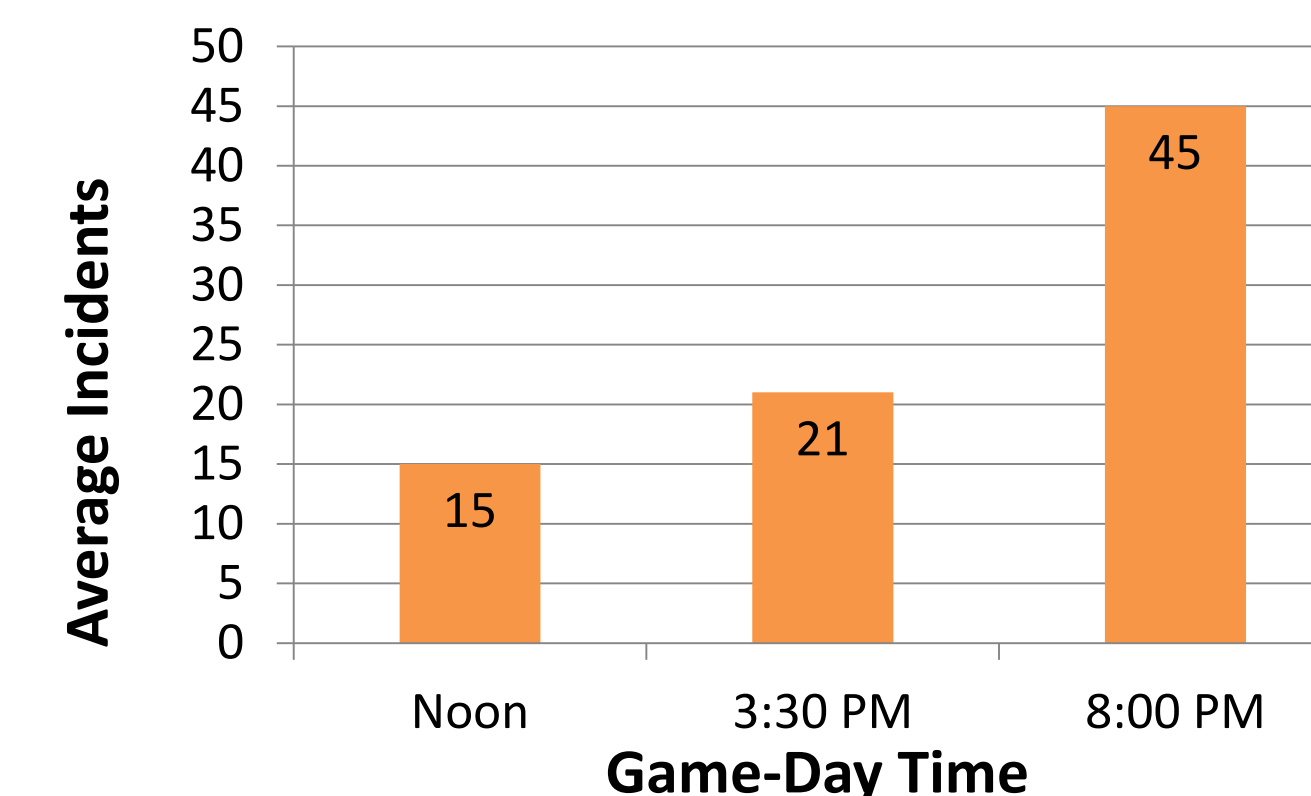
Average Game Day Attendance vs. Game Day Incidents by Season



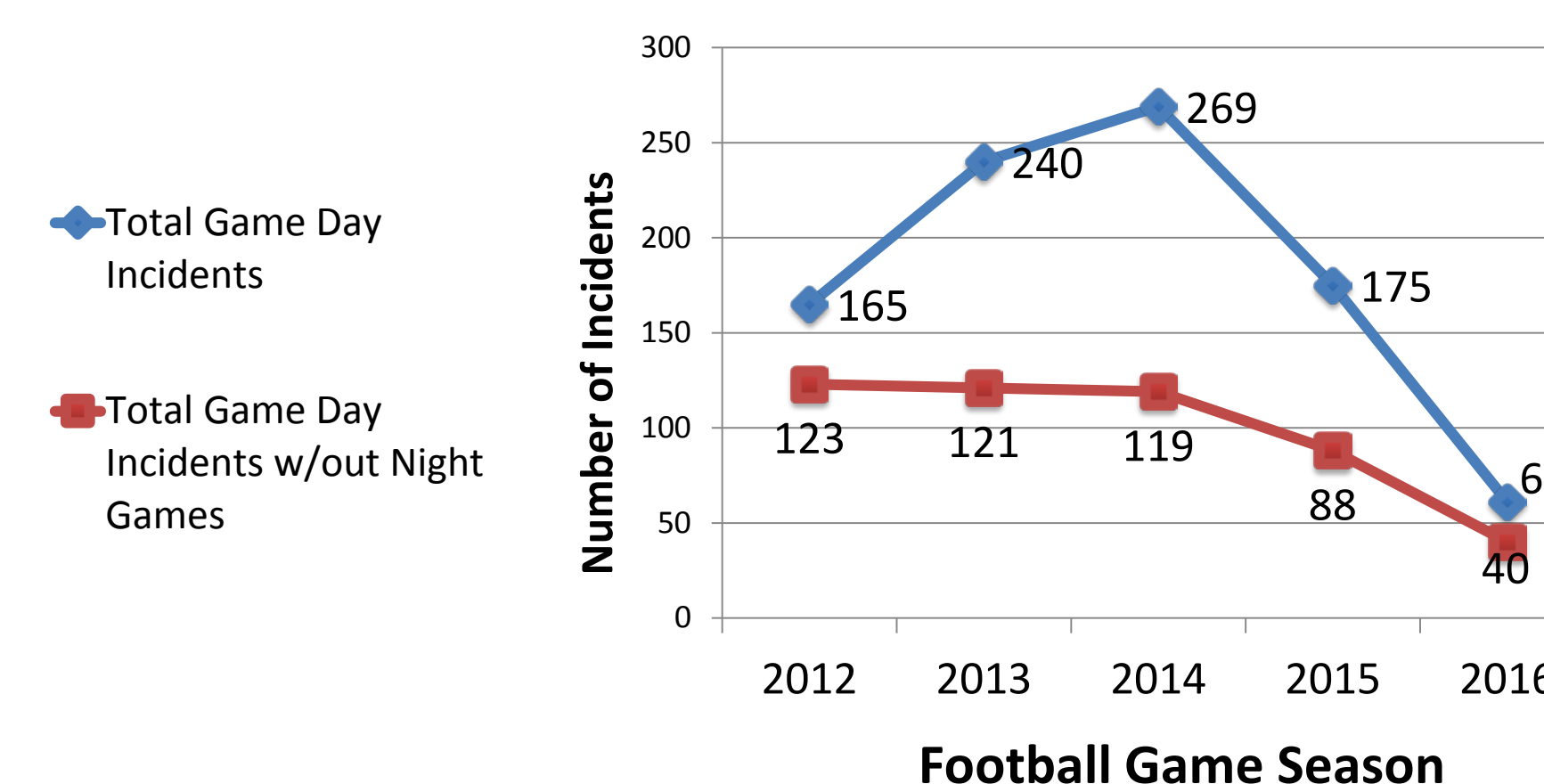
Game Day Average Points Scored vs. Game Day Incidents by Season



Average Number of Incidents per Game-Time 2012-2016



Total Game Day Incidents vs. Total Game Day Incidents without Evening Games



Overall Trends

- Although game-day incidents increased from 2012-2014, incidents have decreased since 2014 showing a downward trend
- Alcohol arrests within the stadium have increased since 2012. This can be attributed to underage guests drinking or buying alcohol, providing alcohol to underage guests, using false ID's to purchase alcohol, as well as increased crack-down by law enforcement
- Game-day ejections have overall decreased in the past three seasons

Temperature Trends

- Temperature did not appear to have a significant relationship to the number of game-day incidents over five years.

Attendance Trends

- Game-day attendance did not appear to have a significant relationship to the number of game incidents over five years.

Points Scored

- Points scored during games did not appear to have a significant relationship to the number of game incidents over five years

Game Time Trends

- The trends show that the time of the football game had a strong relationship to the number of incidents reported. Evening games that started at 6 p.m. or 8 p.m. saw the highest incident rates.
- When evening games were removed from the data set, overall incidents were noticeably lower. Decreasing incident trends, particularly in the past three seasons, can still be seen. This may be related to responsible stadium drinking policies.

Implications & Future Research

This study provides initial findings showing a recent decreasing trend in game-day incidents, which may be due to responsible drinking policies. Stadium-wide alcohol sales may give guests opportunities to drink more moderately inside the stadium. Bag policy could also prevent guests from bringing alcohol into the stadium. Causality cannot be established, however. More research will be conducted for future games evaluating trends.

Acknowledgements

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